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BUDDHISM

BY

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Rangoon,**

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INTRODUCTION

Buddhism has developed with such luxuriance, and has spread over so large a portion of the East, that it is only possible for the writer of this pamphlet to discuss it from that point of view with which he is more familiar. He worked for five years in Burma among Europeans, and such time as he could spare to the study of Buddhism was largely spent in meeting the special difficulties with regard to it, which occupied the minds of his European congregations.

These difficulties, and those who feel them, seem to fall into two groups. There are those, in the first place, who fancy that Christianity was very largely indebted in early days to Buddhist influences ; and then there are those who trouble very little about this first difficulty (and indeed, there is very little to be said for it) but who do feel that Buddhism, in whole or in part, offers a very reasonable attitude towards some of the problems of life.

Our solution of these difficulties must emerge in the course of the following pages, which are for the most part compiled from papers written from time to time in the course of editing the *Rangoon Diocesan Magazine*, during the years 1904-8, and were also published in the *Lay Reader* in 1911.

I should like to express my indebtedness to many of my fellow-workers in Burma, but most of all to the Rev. G. Whitehead, whose great knowledge of Buddhists and Buddhism underlies many of its statements.

F.E.T.

April 1913.



BUDDHISM

I

Before proceeding to discuss the History and Doctrine of Buddhism, it may be well to face a question which is very often found troubling the minds of those who are interested in its origin.

Had Buddhism any influence in shaping the doctrines and literature of Christianity?

The influence has been so strenuously denied, and by such scholars as Oldenburg, Rhys Davids, Max Müller, and Monier Williams, that it seems hardly worth while to raise the question. But we so often hear that influence affirmed, that it may be well to make it our starting point.

Such a starting point has its advantages, for it at once raises the question of the content of Buddhism, and of the books in which it is best to study it.

Many people who are attracted by Buddhism, seem to be under the impression that anything that is written on the subject, be it poetry or prose, is equally valuable as a guide to the understanding of it.

To take a good example—how many owe their knowledge of Buddhism to Sir Edwin Arnold's

poem, "The Light of Asia." It is a fascinating poem, but, as a text-book on Buddhism, it is about as reliable as the so-called Apocryphal Gospels would be as text-books of Christianity. For "The Light of Asia" is based on the "Lalita Vistara," a Sanscrit poem composed from 600 to 1,000 years after the death of the Buddha, the contents of which are, in the treatment of the subject, wide as the poles asunder from early Buddhism. Moreover, to anyone who reads it closely, it is clear that "The Light of Asia" owes many of its most beautiful ideas and metaphors to those Christian Scriptures with which we may suppose Sir Edwin Arnold to have been well acquainted.

At times, the popular literature on Buddhism takes on a rather ludicrous shape.

Some may have heard of "The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ," which a Russian traveller, M. Notovitch, claimed to have found in the monastery of Himis in Little Tibet, in 1887—88. M. Notovitch's story was this. While travelling he broke his leg, and was taken in and tenderly nursed by the monks of Himis. His stay, thus prolonged, resulted in the discovery among Tibetan MSS. of a "Life of Jesus of Nazareth," who, he declared, under the name of "Issa," was well known, and widely revered in Tibet. The life states that Our Lord had resided in India, and derived much of His teaching from Buddhism. Unfortunately for M. Notovitch's find, a well-known Oriental scholar, Professor Douglas of the Government

College, Agra, proceeded to Himis, obtained entrance into the monastery, and with the help of a Tibetan, Stahmwell Joldan, ex-postmaster of Ladakh, who acted as interpreter, was able to sift the story. The Chief Lama declared that no sick European had ever been nursed in his monastery, and that in his long life as Lama, at Himis and elsewhere, he had never heard of "Issa." If those who are curious in the bye-paths of romance care to follow up the matter, they will find an exhaustive statement of it in the *Nineteenth Century* of October 1894 and April 1896, where Professors Douglas and Max Müller expose M. Notovitch's lie. The incident aroused much interest at the time, and the French edition of M. Notovitch's book ran through eleven editions.

Have such stories still a vogue for amateur students of Buddhism? It would seem they must have, for I have before me a "Buddhist Catechism" which has something very much like it. It is written by "Subhadra Bhikshu," one of many Europeans who have donned the yellow robe of the monk in Ceylon and Burma, and on page 58 is the following note:—

"It is very probable that Jesus of Nazareth, whose teachings in some respects contain much intrinsic agreement with those of Buddhism, was a pupil of Buddhist monks from his twelfth to his thirtieth year, of which time the gospels have nothing to report about Him. He then returned to His home to promulgate the doctrine to His people. This doctrine of Jesus was subsequently mutilated and mixed with passages from the law books of the Jews."

Those who embark on the serious study of Buddhism, however, soon discover that a Higher Criticism has been at work among the Buddhist as well as among the Christian Scriptures. They soon learn to distinguish between the many writers on Buddhism, between those who, like De Bunsen and Professor Seydel, have a very particular axe to grind, and unbiassed scholars like Prof. Rhys Davids and Dr. Oldenburg. They soon learn to distinguish between what is conveniently called Southern and Northern Buddhism, and find that while the supposed resemblances to Christianity are found almost entirely in the Northern Buddhism, this Northern Buddhism developed so late that it is as reasonable to postulate a Christian influence upon Buddhism as a Buddhist influence on Christianity. The researches of the late Professor Lloyd, of Tokio, seem very clearly to show that this was indeed the case.

But it is also quite possible that the student of Buddhism will be content to avoid a tortuous by-path, and will be satisfied that all serious students have categorically denied any influence of Buddhism on Christianity. It will be sufficient to quote from Professor Rhys Davids' Hibbert Lectures on the "Origin and Growth of Religions." The derivation of Christian ideas by Christian writers from Indian sources has, he says, been often affirmed but, "more often in popular lectures and in magazine articles than in independent books, and more often by those who are glad to throw discredit on

Christianity than by serious scholars." He goes on to say that he has carefully sifted the evidence but can find "no evidence whatever of any actual and direct communication of any of the ideas from the East to the West. Where the Gospel narratives resemble the Buddhist ones, they seem to me to have been independently developed on the shores of the Mediterranean and in the valley of the Ganges, and strikingly similar as they are at first sight, the slightest comparison is sufficient to show that they rest throughout on a basis of doctrine fundamentally opposed."

And so we pass to consider (a) the History, and (b) the Doctrine of Buddhism.

(a) *First as to the History.*

We glean the story of the origin of Buddhism, just as we shall have to glean the substance of its doctrine, from the Pitakas, the sacred scriptures of the Buddhists. They were composed and handed down, not in Sanscrit, the sacred tongue of India, but in the Prakrit, the language of everyday life, for Buddhism ignored caste and made its appeal to all. In the third century, B.C., Buddhism was carried over into Ceylon, and it is in Ceylon and in Pāli, which would seem to have been the Prakrit of the Deccan, that the Buddhist scriptures have been preserved to us in their purest form.

But though writing was used in commerce, it was as yet little valued in the schools of religion and

philosophy ; the memory was regarded as the more reliable vehicle, and the teachings of the Buddha bear evident traces of the mnemonic system by which they were handed down. It was not till the last century B.C. in the reign of Vattagámini of Ceylon that the scriptures were first committed to writing. Moreover—in these Buddhist scriptures—there is no life of the Buddha in the same way that there is a life of Christ. There is no Buddhist “gospel.” It was the teaching, and not the ‘person’ of the Buddha that early Buddhists were most concerned in transmitting, and the particulars of the life which can be gleaned from the ancient texts are scanty in the extreme. This is the opinion of the most eminent writers on Buddhism. Says Professor Oldenburg, “a biography of the Buddha has not come down to us from ancient times, from the age of the Pali Texts” and, he adds, “we can safely say, no such biography was in existence then.” Again, “It is later centuries which have built up a history of Buddhism with wonders piled on wonders on a scale quite different from older times. and which first devoted themselves with special zeal to surrounding the blessed child with the extravagant creations of a boundless imagination.”

What may we consider then that we know about the Buddha’s life ?

He was born about 560 B.C. at Kapilavastu on the borders of modern Nepaul about the time when Cyrus the Great was raising Persia to

supremacy, and the Jewish captivity in Babylon was drawing to its close. His father was Suddhodana, not king, but chief and wealthy landowner of the clan of the Sakya. His mother, Maya, died soon after his birth. He may have received the name of Siddhattha, but it is by his family name of Gautama that he is generally known. He was married early. His wife's name is uncertain, but there was one child, the boy Rahula.

At the age of 29 or 30 he abandoned his home, and became a wandering ascetic. Apparently he wearied of earthly enjoyment, brooded over the satiety and suffering of life, and, like many another ascetically minded Indian of his day, went forth to find the secret of deliverance and peace.

“The ascetic Gautama has gone from home into homelessness, while still young, young in years, in the bloom of youthful strength, in the first freshness of life. The ascetic Gautama, although his parents did not wish it, although they shed tears and wept, has had his hair and beard shaved, has put on yellow garments, and has gone from his home into homelessness.”

Again :

“Full of hindrance is this household life, the haunt of passion. Free as the air is the homeless state. Thus he considered, and went forth.”

For many years he sought, and did not find. He tried many teachers ; he experimented in the severest self-discipline and asceticism, but found no peace. At length, under the famous Bo-Tree, close by where now stands the Temple of Buddha-Gaya, he attained, as he believed, the enlightenment he

sought ; he became the Buddha, *i.e.* “the awakened one.” He saw the causes which keep beings involved in the mazes of Trans-migration, the causes of this suffering, the way to its extinction. And though he feared that the truth, as it seemed to him, would find few ready listeners, he overcame the temptation to keep his knowledge to himself, and spent forty gentle years proclaiming the doctrine, and building up the brotherhood of monks which was to continue his work. He passed away, at the age of fourscore years, about 480 B.C.

There were other teachers, other sects, in the India of those days, seeking enlightenment, and establishing their doctrines by much the same means which Gautama tried. Such a teacher, such a system was that of Nâtaputta, the founder of the Jains, who still flourish in India ; and for two centuries it does not appear that Buddhism obtained any great predominance. Then about 260 B.C., it conquered the heart of the great Asoka, third of the Mauryan dynasty, which rose to power after the invasion of Alexander. Under his patronage Buddhism became the dominant religion of his Indian Empire, and “the yellow robes shone over the land.” Missions were sent to neighbouring lands. Edicts carved on pillars even claim that in some way, not clearly defined, Greek kingdoms on the Mediterranean were affected, but Professor Rhys Davids regards this as very possibly only royal rhodomontade. Certainly the Buddha is not

even mentioned in western records before 180 A.D., and then in the pages of a Christian writer, Clement of Alexandria. There is mention in a Ceylon chronicle, a century after Asoka's time, of a large Buddhist community at Alasadda in the Yona country (*i.e.* Alexandria in the country of the Greeks), but scholars almost unanimously regard it as being one of the many Alexandrias in the Græco-Bactrian kingdom which then flourished in what is now Afghanistan

It was long after Asoka's time, and about the beginning of the Christian era, that Buddhism broke asunder into the two great schools, which are usually known as the Northern and Southern Buddhism. The Buddhism of Asoka's day, the Buddhism of the Pali Pitakas, which scholars regard as the most authentic chronicle of the history and doctrines of Buddhism, was gradually confined to the monasteries of Ceylon. To this Buddhism of the South, which issued centuries later to become the Buddhism of more modern Burma and Siam, the Northern Buddhists gave the name of "The Hinayana" or "The lesser Curricule." For themselves, they arrogated the term of the "Mahayana" or "The great Curricule." A good deal of mystery hangs round the origin of Mahayanist Buddhism. Its literature was written not in Pali, but in Sanscrit, and is widely different in contents and character from that of the Southern Buddhists. Its ideals, too, were different, and led to more imaginative legends, and to the practical deification

of the Buddha in those lands to which it ultimately spread—for a time in Northern India and Burma, and more permanently in China, Mongolia, and Japan.

We cannot follow this part of our subject further. It will suffice to say this. It is not in the works of the Southern Buddhism, in the older Pali Recension, but in the later Sanscrit works of the Northern Buddhism, that we find that more elaborate Buddhism which, by some, is supposed to be so similar to the teachings of Christianity. Of these works, the best known is the *Lalita Vistara*, written in Nepaul, Rhys Davids thinks, about 200—600 A.D. It is works of this kind which ascribe to the young Gautama royal race and virgin birth, and describe metamorphoses, and visits to heaven and hell, which may possibly be twisted into resemblances of our Lord's Transfiguration, Descent into Hell, and Ascension, only with this notable difference, that the modesty and restraint of the Christian Gospels are quite absent from these later Buddhist works. We may also note, in passing, that while the documents which assert the Divinity of our Lord are being by critics, even the unorthodox, reassigned to the century in which He appeared on earth, the documents which ascribe divine attributes to the Buddha are shown to belong to a cycle of literature which grew into shape five centuries after the Buddha had passed away.

(b) We turn now to *the Doctrines of Buddhism*.

In studying Buddhism, we have to distinguish

between those teachings which are peculiar to it, and those which it was content to take over, with some modifications, from the older faiths of India ; for, as behind Christianity there stands the background of Israel, so Buddhism, as a reforming and Puritan movement, arises from the midst of the India of that day.

We find, then, that Buddhism has retained two older beliefs or ideas—*Transmigration* and *Karma*.

The idea underlying *Transmigration* is simplicity itself. It is that at death the soul passes into other bodies, men or beasts, or even gods. Possibly it is a survival of the older animistic creed, which peopled all things, sun and moon, trees and rocks, men and beasts, with a soul or spirit.

In India, before the time of Gautama, another doctrine had come to be associated with *Transmigration*, that of *Karma*. This had the result of making *Transmigration* more ethical, for *Karma* means “action,” and the *Transmigration-Karma* theory taught that a man’s position in this life (whether social or otherwise) was a result of his actions in some former life, and that, according to his actions in this life, his position in his next existence, for weal or woe, was being determined. If a man was born dumb it was due to misuse of the tongue in a former life, and if, despite this warning, he added cruelty to his faults, he might become a tiger. In all cases the punishment was supposed to fit the crime.

Such an explanation is purely hypothetical, nor does it really solve the initial difficulty of the inequalities in life ; it only throws the difficulty further back ; but so far it seems simple enough.

Buddhism, however, introduced a further difficulty by denying the *Individuality of Man*, the *Self* or the *Soul*.

That this is so, is clear to any one with the most elementary knowledge of Buddhist literature. We are, as the nun Vajirá told Mâra the Tempter, or as the saint Nâgasena told the King Milinda, a mere bundle of sensations ("skandhas") or changful conformations ("sankhâra") ; just as the pole and axle and wheels and body make a chariot, and when torn apart cease to be a chariot, so our skin and bones, sensations and perceptions, and so forth, make what we, for the time being, foolishly imagine to be a person or subject ; but they have only to break up and fall asunder in death to make us realise there is none.

But if Buddhism denies the existence of the soul, where, we ask, does it find the link between the different lives in the long chain of Transmigration ? What is it that ties my life on to some other past life ? The Buddhist answers that it is "*Tanhâ*" or *Thirst*. In the Buddhist adaptation of the doctrines of Transmigration and Karma, no soul or consciousness or memory goes over from one body to the other. It is the grasping, the craving still existing at the death of our body that causes

the new set of "Skandhas," that is, the new body with its mental tendencies and capacities, to arise, and attaches to them the Karma of the past life.

We are now in a position to understand *the distinctive doctrine of Buddhism*.

To Gautama, the Wanderer, who had left home and kindred, one thing seemed uppermost, the suffering of every form of life on earth. Suffering had marked all the previous existences through which the Karma had acted; it was to mark all those which should arise in the future. How was he to break the chain of suffering being, and find peace?

Many were the paths he had followed, even to the most rigid asceticism. At last, under the Bo-Tree at Uruvela, comes to him, not by revelation (for Buddhism knows nothing of divine aid) but by intuition, the knowledge of four Noble Truths, the knowledge of which, as the means of release from sentient life, constitute him the Buddha, or the Awakened One.

Here are *The Four Noble Truths* as they were promulgated in the Buddha's first sermon at Benares:—

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to suffering. Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful. Death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful; painful is separation from the pleasant; and any craving unsatisfied, that, too, is painful. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging (that is, the conditions of individuality) are painful.

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Now this is the Noble Truth as to the origin of suffering. Verily ! it is the craving thirst that causes the renewal of **becomings**, that is accompanied by sensual delights, and seeks satisfaction, now here, now there—that is to say, the craving for a future life, or the craving for prosperity.

Now this is the Noble Truth as to the passing away of **pain**. Verily ! it is the passing away so that no passion remains, the giving up, the getting rid of it, the emancipation **from**, the harbouring no longer of this craving thirst.

Now this is the Noble Truth as to the way that leads to **the** passing away of pain. Verily ! it is this noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, Right Views, Right Aspirations, Conduct and Mode of Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Rapture.”

The Four Truths are the Creed of Buddhism. They show us what it is. It does not profess to enquire into the ultimate ground of things. It addresses itself to man plunged in sorrow, teaches him to understand his sorrow, and shows him the way of escape. It may be summed up in two words—suffering, and release.

“As the vast ocean, O disciples, is impregnated with one taste, the taste of salt, so also, my disciples, this Law and Doctrine is impregnated with but one taste, with the taste of deliverance.”

To the Buddha, says Oldenburg, sorrow is not merely a cloud over human life which will pass away, but “sorrow and death pertain inseparably to every state of being,” not only to that of men and animals, but even to that of those gods, or Devas, who lie at the back alike of the Buddhist and of the Hindu conceptions of existence.

“What think ye, disciples, whether is more, the water which is in the four great oceans, or the tears which have

flown from you and have been shed by you, while ye strayed and wandered on this long pilgrimage, and sorrowed and wept, because that was your portion which ye abhorred, and that which ye loved was not your portion? A mother's death, a father's death the loss of relations, all this ye have experienced through long ages. And while ye have experienced this through long ages, more tears have flown from you and have been shed by you than all the water which is in the four great oceans."

But on the Buddha, under the Bo-Tree, there dawns a way of escape. And to all who grasp the four Truths, and follow on the Eightfold Path, there will come the same release. For they will have overcome the thirst and clinging to existence, through the force of which the Karma of their Action would otherwise have taken root in some other existence. In their case, at any rate, the chain of Transmigration is snapped, and they can peacefully await till death brings the end.

It is this peaceful waiting which is described as *Nirvana*, or the "dying out."

To Western students of Buddhism, accustomed to the idea of the immortality of the soul, it has often seemed as if Nirvana must mean "annihilation of existence," and that this is the goal of the Buddhist. The greatest scholars of Buddhism, however, deny this. They point out that Buddhism concerns itself with this life only. Nirvana means the dying out of the three cardinal sins, sensuality, ill-will, and stupidity. It is the state of those who have put away from them the thirst of life, and peacefully await the end. Of any life beyond this,

whether conscious or unconscious, or something different from either, Buddhism does not speak. "The Exalted One has not revealed it."

And the same scholars point out that the atmosphere which surrounds the early Buddhists is no mere resignation, but expresses itself in hymns of deepest joy.

"It is in very bliss we dwell, we who hate not those who hate us ;

Among men full of hate, we continue void of hate.

It is in very bliss we dwell, we in health among the ailing ;

Among men weary and sick, we continue well.

It is in very bliss we dwell, free from care among the care-worn ;

Among men full of worries, we continue calm.

It is in very bliss we dwell, we who have no hindrances;

We will become feeders on joy, like the gods in their shining splendour."

II.

So much for the History and Doctrine of Buddhism. We go on now to consider some of *the lines on which the Church of Christ is to make its answer to it.*

Stated very briefly, our answer is this—that *Buddhism denies or ignores some of the most fundamental instincts of man*, instincts which, on the other hand, find recognition and satisfaction in Christianity.

Christianity is the Gospel of the Love of God. God has made and controls all things, and made them with a purpose; man, that he might find his highest happiness and usefulness in knowing God, the world to be man's schooling-place, and life man's opportunity for choosing God. If sin has brought discord into the scheme of things, there is yet hope, for God has entered into conflict with sin, and the end will be victory.

Such a gospel is, in its very nature, universal. We know not yet what it portends for the human race, but we must proclaim it, and in proclaiming it we find that certain assumptions or postulates which lie at the back of Christianity lie also, however inarticulate, at the back of men's minds, and make, as it were, a sort of common language, which makes it possible for us to give and them to understand our message. These assumptions are a belief in God and a belief in the soul. God speaks to us and we can speak to Him.

But when we turn to Buddhism, we find it knows nothing of this common language ; knows nothing of God, or the soul, or of the possibility of intercourse between them.

It is quite possible that a Buddhist might object to our argument, and say that we have no right to speak of such beliefs as God, or the soul, as among the fundamental instincts of the human race, for they are not held by the Buddhists, and the Buddhists are said to number a third of the human race.

But this is just the point where we join issue—not, indeed, with Buddhists, but with Buddhism. The abstract Buddhism, thought out and taught by Gautama, knows nothing of God, or soul, or sin, or prayer, or sacrifice, but Buddhists, though swayed and attracted by the gentle figure of Gautama, have so widely rebelled against his negations that, to use the words of Professor Rhys Davids, “not one of the five hundred millions who offer flowers now and then on Buddhist shrines, and who are moulded more or less by Buddhist teaching, is only or altogether a Buddhist.” And we shall perceive, as we go on, that the points, on which the Buddhist rebels, are just those truths of God and the soul to which we have referred, and which would seem to be part of man’s make or nature. It is not, *i.e.*, a revolt of sinful wills, averse to noble ideals, though no doubt there is plenty of such revolt in Buddhism as there is in Christianity, but it is a revolt against negations which would seem to be contrary to men’s nature.

Let us consider how some of these negations of the Buddha fare among Buddhists.

(1) First—*The negation of God.*

It is true that the Gods or Devas of Hinduism have found a place in Buddhism and figure in its literature, but to none of them can we ascribe the title of God in a Christian or theistic sense. They are merely beings of a higher order than man, subject to all men's faults and miseries, and as dependent as man for ultimate deliverance on following the Buddha's method. They are, after all, but "supers" in the play, and it is possible, in discussing the drama, to leave them out of consideration altogether.

Are we wrong in suggesting that one feature in Buddhism which recommends it to some Western minds in this negation of God? Certainly it seems to be one of the points on which Europeans who have capitulated to Buddhism and assumed the yellow robe of the Buddhism monk lay particular stress.

Writing in the sixth number of "Buddhism," the Rangoon Magazine of the "Buddhasasana Samagana," Sasanavamsa wrote as follows :—

"The Buddha does not deny the gods ; he has no reason for doing so ; he merely ignores them, as indeed he could not help but do. From this point of view the only thing of interest is to find one's way out of the burning house of sentient life . . . the law of change is universal . . . it rules in the Heavens as well as upon the earth ; and wheresoever change is, there also is there suffering and sorrow."

The creed which reduces "God" to a nonentity is as truly atheistic as that which denies Him outright, and in the same magazine the Bhikku Ananda Metteya, leader of the Buddhist mission to England in 1908, chooses the latter course. For him the problem of pain clinches the matter. After describing nature as "contrived for inflicting on living creatures the greatest possible torment," he concludes that if a man—

"Had once faith in God, in some great Being, who had designed the Universe, he can no longer hold it; for any Being, as now he clearly sees, who would have contrived a Universe wherein lies all this wanton war, this piteous mass of pain co-terminous with life, must have been a Demon and not a God."

So, again, in the first two numbers of the "Buddhist Review," first published in England in 1909, there is the same insistence on the fact that in Buddhism a religion is offered to mankind that dispenses with "Belief."

But this very negation of God, which recommends it to the Western agnostic, also explains the loose hold of Buddhism on the Eastern mind. Statistical returns of religions talk of the five hundred millions of Buddhists, but there are few, indeed, who do not supplement their creed with some other system of belief. Burma is said to be the land where Buddhism is most strongly operative, and yet there, as in China or Japan, it has been unable to crush out the older animistic faiths of the people. "A thin veneer of philosophy laid over

the main structure of Shamanistic belief" was the verdict of the Census Report of Burma in 1891.

Those who know the Burmese intimately testify to the fact that, swayed as he is by the older Animism, there is something yet more alien to Buddhism at the back of his mind, and that is an underlying conviction of the existence of God. For illustration, we would refer our readers to an article entitled "Buddhism in Burma" by the Rev. G. Whitehead, in "The East and the West" for January, 1907. Twice during the last 120 years have sects arisen in Burma to teach a theism which is utterly opposed to Buddhism, and both have had to be put down forcibly—the "Sodi," to whom Father San Germano refers in his "Burmese Empire," and the "Paramats," whose leader, Maung Po, was impaled by the enlightened Mindohn Min, father of Theebaw. Many of the latter have found their way into the Christian Church.

The evidence might be indefinitely multiplied if the writer had more knowledge of the Northern Buddhism of China, Japan, and Corea, for there the atheism of Buddhism has been frankly cast aside, and the Buddha himself has, to all intents and purposes, become divine—worshipped as Kwan-Yin, Goddess of Mercy, or as Amitabha Buddha, who sits eternally enthroned in heaven, and emanating from whom the Buddhas appear from time to time on earth.

Or note, again, the strange disappearance of Buddhism from India. We hear of but little persecution, yet Buddhism vanishes from the land. Either the early histories exaggerate the extent to which Asoka constrained the people to Buddhism, or else we have here a further witness to the fact that the negations of Buddhism altogether fail to hold the hearts of men. Can it be said of any other great religion that it has been tried by a great land like India, and, after experience, cast aside?

In an article in the first number of "Buddhism" 1903, the Rangoon Magazine alluded to above, there is an apposite illustration of what we are trying to prove. The writer, Maung Po Mé, is seeking to show that the Burman is altogether a Buddhist, but, in endeavouring to smile away the Animism of his people, he only provides us with a clearer illustration of its power. "If," he says, "in times of sorrow, of calamities, we see the Burmese Buddhist act otherwise [*i.e.*, than in accordance with Buddhist law and custom], we must know that he has been faced by a riddle of the universe and he cannot find a solution; in his performance of an old-time rite he may seek consolation, but that does not mean that he has found a solution of the riddle. He has merely done that which is *human* and which he thinks right."

Maung Po Mé's last sentence is suggestive. In ignoring the fundamental instincts of mankind,

Buddha has made it certain that his followers will deny their faith whenever their deepest thoughts are stirred. It is not that they are bad but simply that they are "human."

(2) Next take *the negation of the soul*.

Here is a thoughtful English Buddhist's description of the doctrine of the soul, or rather, of the non-soul, as taught by his new faith. It is taken from "Buddhism," No. 1 : —

"There is nothing whatever, according to Buddhist ideas, which re-incarnates, a term which implies the existence of a ghost or soul in the being, which (as the Hindus believe) passes over from body to body as a man changes his clothes. Buddhism denies the existence of anything to re-incarnate ; so Buddhism does not teach re-incarnation ; all that passes over from life to life, according to our views, is this evolved energy of the tendencies. A good simile of the idea intended to be conveyed is that of the transmission of energy commonly used in text books on physics. You place a number of billiard balls in a line, each in contact with his neighbour, and strike the end one ; the balls all along the line cannot appreciably move because each has another in front of it, but they transmit the energy, and the ball at the other end of the row flies off, after a small interval of time."

But this belief of the learned Buddhist, well versed in the Pali Texts, has very little influence on the ordinary Buddhist crowd. The Burman goes dutifully to the Pagoda, and ejaculates "Anicca, Dukka, Anatta"—*i.e.* "impermanence, trouble, unsubstantiality (or 'no soul,' 'no ego')," but nevertheless, in his daily thoughts, he postulates a soul, or "butterfly," which, when he dies, departs

to find some other bodily home, and they believe that the "Karma" of their action goes along with the soul, so that the next existence will be the existence of their own soul, and not merely the existence of some other being who merely inherits their Karma. So, too, in the Jataka, the "Birth Stories" of the Buddha, the popular tales which describe all the existences through which he passed before he achieved Buddhahood. It is everywhere taken for granted that it is the same personality which lives and loves, suffers and rejoices in the ancient tales. And, after all, it is the Jataka, and not the Pitaka, which are the literature of the Burmese.

(3) *Yet a third negation.*

Buddhism fails to concern itself with that which is the main trouble of mankind—its *sin*. To the theist, God is the object of religion, and the main obstacle to the realising of fellowship with God, and, through fellowship, the happiness for which man is made, is sin. But, just as Buddhism ignores the object of religion, so it knows very little of the obstacle. And here, again, Buddhism runs counter to the instincts of mankind, for, as Professor F. B. Jevons tells us: "If the facts of comparative religion are to be interpreted, if any meaning whatever is to be put upon them, they show what we know, that the whole world groaneth and travaileth in pain together under the sense of sin, for an escape from sin, and for a means of reconciliation with its God."

It is not that Buddhism altogether ignores sin. Of sin conceived as a misery, as an evil which wrecks man's life, as a burden which he helplessly and hopelessly tries to fling off, Buddhism is full. But while it pathetically describes the symptoms, it fails to diagnose the cause, for the simple reason that it knows not God. To the Buddha it is folly rather than sin, and the chiefest of sins is ignorance. There is none of that personal relation between Creator and created, Heavenly Father and earthly prodigal son, to throw light upon the problem. Existence, for the Buddha, is a great casual machine, grinding out results. Every act produces its result, and so on from eternity to eternity. Of the personal love which inspires men to repent, and which promises to repentance, and to the change of character which ever accompanies real repentance, forgiveness, of that there is nothing in Buddhism. An earthly father forgives his son, and the son is thereby heartened and inspired to do better, and this simple everyday occurrence helps us to accept the great mystery of the Atonement, and to understand, in part, the love of God. But of this the Buddha knows nothing; for him there is none to hear, and none to answer.

Hence for the Buddhist the main problem is not "sin," but "suffering." That "life is suffering" is the first Noble Truth.

To us this seems like thinking awry, for, believing as we do in a God of Love, though suffering remains in great part a dark cloud over life, yet that cloud has a silver lining.

Character, to the Christian, is the great end of life, and the problem of life is the formation of character in the face of the moral evil or sin which has sprung up in rebellious wills, and in the solution of that problem pain has a place and does a work which nothing else can do. It is not only that pain tends to restrain man from sin, but it is one of the strongest factors in the spiritual progress of the race.

The Christian does not believe that God invented pain, but he does believe that God uses it, and that, in becoming incarnate, He subjected Himself to the test, and showed men how to bear and use it. To the Christian it seems much truer to say that "Life is," not suffering, but "discipline," and over against the first Noble Truth of Buddhism, he sets the words of Christ: "Blessed are they that mourn." It is not an easy thing to say, but the saints of God have taught us to say it, and that the men of sorrow have lifted the world to higher things is an assured truth of human experience as well as of theological science.

So much then for the negations of Buddhism. It would seem as if the mission of the Church towards Buddhism is not so much to throw down as to build up, not to attack the figure of Gautama—who indeed does not feel its gentle spell?—not to attack its ethical ideals, though those ideals disclose the essentially monastic character of Buddhist morality; but rather to address itself to those presuppositions of religion which lie at the

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base even of the Buddhist mind and lead many a Buddhist to rebel at the negations of his master. The Christian writer, Tertullian, spoke of the witness of the soul “naturally Christian,” meaning that deep down within us all are already laid the foundations of theism, and the yearnings which predispose us to accept the love of God in Christ. Augustine’s oft-quoted words are appropriate here too—“Our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.” It is to such fundamental instincts that the Christian missionary addresses himself, and he rarely fails to find them, even in the Buddhist.

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III.

Before closing this paper, it would be well to make a few observations on *Buddhist Ethics*. No one can deny that there is great beauty in much of Buddhist ethical teaching. What especially appeals to the Christian is on the one hand the refusal of the Buddha to make the highest and best thoughts on religion the property of one caste only, and on the other his insistence that the outward observances of religion are as nothing compared with inward purity of life. But as the true value of a person lies not so much in what he is, but in what he is becoming, so the true value of a system of ethical teaching, and the place we are to assign it as compared to other systems, lies in the motive power which it offers to the moral life, and the ideal to which it endeavours to lift men. If we bear this in mind can we ever be in doubt as to the relative value of Christian and Buddhist ethics? The good Buddhist no doubt does often put the Christian to shame, but we hold that there is in Christianity a far higher motive power to goodness than there can ever be in Buddhism.

For the Christian the motive, which is to inspire him to the moral life, is gratitude ; gratitude to God for creating him for endless life, for redeeming him from the sin which would render him incapable of that life, and for sanctifying him and preparing him for it. That lower motives often prevail among Christians we do not deny, but a religion must be

judged by the motive which its founder supplies, and the motive which Christ gave His followers was gratitude to God. It is the same motive as that which inspires children in a happy home to love and serve their parents and each other.

What, on the other hand, is *the motive which the Buddha sets before his disciples?* Can we say it is anything more elevated than a desire to *escape from the suffering of life?* What higher motives could he offer, knowing as he did nothing of God or of the value of the human soul? He could not speak of a more abundant life, or bid his disciples covet earnestly the best gifts. He could only teach them to distrust life and quench desire.

Consequently *the Buddha's ideal is essentially monastic.* He does not teach men to live in the world and make it something worthy of life, but rather to separate from it.

Not that he ignored the laity ; for the laity, too, Gautama had his precepts, and by following them the laity could live a good life, and their "karma" would ensure a better position in some other existence for those who inherited it ; but the highest salvation of all, the Nirvana, was only possible for those who had renounced the ties of home and the cares of life and donned the yellow robe. Just as the Master himself had been able to find peace only by leaving his home and loved ones in Kapilavastu, so to reach the end of sorrow must his followers embrace the life of the mendicant.

Removing the character of a householder, like a tree, whose leaves are cut off, clothed in a yellow robe, let one wander alone as a rhinoceros.

There is none of that assurance that we find in Christianity, that in whatever path of life our lot is cast we may find salvation, and opportunities enough of consecrating life to God ; no assurance that—

The trivial round, the common task
Will furnish all we need to ask,
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To lead us daily nearer God.

Nowhere is the monastic character of Buddhist ethics clearer than in *its conception of Love*. Buddhist love occasionally approaches Christian love, but never really touches it ; it is benevolence rather than beneficence, always characterised by a certain aloofness from the joys and sorrows of men, as different as can be from the love which touched the leper and embraced the Cross.

On the one hand you find expressions in Buddhist literature which seems almost an echo of the New Testament.

Let a man overcome evil with good ; let a man overcome the parsimonious with generosity ; let a man overcome the liar with truth.

And then on the other hand, you find such expressions as the following :—

Let no man ever look for what is pleasant or what is unpleasant. Not to see what is pleasant is pain, and it is pain to see what is unpleasant.

Let no man therefore love anything : loss of the beloved is evil. Those who love nothing have no fetters.

From love comes grief, from love comes fear ; he who is free from love knows neither grief nor fear.

The attitude to life, which Gautama would seem to have set before his followers as ideal, would seem to be an indifference to life, and an aloofness not only from the evil but also from those who are struggling to do good, which at times seems indistinguishable from selfishness.

Those who cause me pain and those who cause me joy, to all I am alike ; affection and hatred I know not. In joy and sorrow I remain unmoved, in honour and in dishonour ; throughout I am alike. That is the perfection of my equanimity.

In the “Wéthandaya,” the last of the Jataka tales, there is a striking illustration which bears on what we have said. The Wéthandaya describes among other things the culminating act of charity by which in his last existence but one on earth the future Buddha qualified for Buddhahood ; it was the giving up to an old Brahmin, who wanted them for his slaves, first his two children, and then his wife. On being asked for the latter, says the story—

He did not reply, “Yesterday I gave away my children to the Brahmin, how can I give Maddi to you to be left alone in the forest” ? No ! he was as though receiving a purse of gold of a thousand pieces of gold ; indifferent, unattached, with no clinging of mind he gave her up.

An English student of Buddhism would perhaps take exception to the Jataka as a text-book on Buddhism, but among Buddhists generally, and certainly in Burma, it is the Jataka and not the

Pitaka which are the literature of the people, and the great renunciation of the Prince Wéthandaya is the popular conception of Buddhist charity. It is no doubt a caricature, but it comes perilously near the truth.

Men are sometimes better, and sometimes worse than their creed, and the Buddhist often excels the Christian, and yet I think it would be fair to say that while the grandest examples of Christian love fall far behind the love of Christ, on the other hand the grandest examples or ideas of self-sacrificing love in the history of Buddhism lie rather at the door of disciples of the Buddha who have modified the teaching of their master.

Here again it seems to be the revolt of the fundamental instincts. Human love will out. The atmosphere of Gautama's benevolence has been at times too cool for his warm-hearted followers. So it is that while in the southern and purer Buddhism the ideal of Arahatsip and the attainment of Nirvana, has ever been the ideal, the northern and more corrupt Buddhists have set before themselves the ideal of becoming Boddhisatvas or embryo Buddhas, that so they might live on from age to age in a suffering world and help mankind. And it is this northern Buddhism which has made the greatest conquests.

Pure Buddhism has the thoroughness of a system of abstract thought, but also its weakness.

The Buddha, wrapt in meditation beneath the Bo-Tree, weaves his scheme of life, and from it excludes all thought of God, or soul, or purpose in the world. Aloofness from life, distrust of life and its concerns, characterize all his attitude to it. But we believe that that other Teacher, who toiled in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, on whose ear fell daily the hum of life, who was seen at wedding feasts, and wept at the graveside of a friend, and over the doom of a city, knows more of the hearts of men, and has for them a truer message.

With one other reflection we would close. It is sometimes claimed that Buddhism has a more acceptable *message for an intellectual age* like our own. Before starting in 1908 on his Mission to England, the Bhikku Ananda Metteya gave expression to this idea in the pages of the Rangoon Buddhist Magazine. Alluding to the strange cessation of Buddhist expansion about the beginning of the Christian era, he assigned it to the fact that Buddhism demands for its acceptance a certain degree of "mental and moral progress." "It became the religion of the civilized third of the human race, and thereafter entered upon a period of cessation from outward activity, waiting these centuries till another third of mankind should be far enough advanced to accept the thinking world's inheritance."

Whether Buddhism is a religion which will attract many thinking Europeans remains to be seen. There seem to be too many gaps in its system ; its assumptions are too great ; and we do not think many people will find " Karma " a reasonable doctrine ; or will be prepared to assign to tanha, or thirst, the power, which hitherto they have ascribed to God, of calling new lives into existence.

But we cannot help thinking that Ananda Metteya probes for us the secret at once of Buddhist failure and stagnation in the past, and the reason why it never will be (in a pure, unadulterated state) one of the world's religions. Mankind, being what it is, does not want a religion which presupposes " a certain degree of mental and moral progress." It wants one which will take it as it is, sinful and ignorant, and by so condescending to its misery, raises it out of its ignorance and sin to better things. To the poor the Gospel is preached," says the Christ ; " To the wise belongeth the law, not to the foolish," says the Buddha. " Very unlike," says Oldenburg, most dispassionate of writers on Buddhism, alluding to this latter passage, " Very unlike the word of that Man who suffered little children to come into Him, for of such is the Kingdom of God. For children, and those who are like children, the arms of Buddha are not opened " ; and again, " to reach the humble and wretched, the sorrowing, who endured yet another sorrow than the great universal

sorrow of impermanence, was not the province of Buddhism.”

Buddhism is attractive in its gentleness, but it runs counter to the deeper thought of humanity, and we do not wonder that it died out in the land of its birth. Nor do we wonder that among the 470,000,000 votaries of the Buddha, there are few who do not supplement their hopeless creed by some other system of belief.



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